Holidays and the UK Afro-Caribbean Community

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This paper considers the factors in modern society that will have a significant influence upon holiday-taking by a UK community of West Indian origin: the Afro-Caribbean community. Research on holiday-taking has tended to overlook the ethnic dimension with the result that the extent, form and direction of holiday-taking by this community are largely unknown. The paper examines the factors that are likely to influence holiday-taking by this particular community: economic, social and cultural and product-related. It is concluded that holiday-taking as experienced by the majority white population is unlikely to be evident in the Afro-Caribbean community; the extent of participation may be much lower and the form may be very different. It is suggested that 'the holiday' is culturally discordant and does not feature prominently in cultural priorities.

Keywords: holidays, Afro-Caribbean, ethnicity, marginality

This paper considers, from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, factors that might have a significant influence upon holidays of the Afro-Caribbean community in the UK. Dann has recently suggested that research in cosmopolitan tourist-generating societies, such as the UK, has been narrowly defined in the interpretation of tourism.[1] The extent and form of holidays by the UK Afro-Caribbean community is largely unresearched; because of this it is necessary to examine related fields in order to deduce likely tourist patterns. A number of holiday-influencing factors are identified and examined. These factors may be categorised as 'economic', 'social and cultural' and 'product' (associated with tourism itself). The 'economic', 'product' and some of the 'social and cultural' factors may be conceptualised as 'marginality' and other 'social and cultural' factors conceptualized as 'ethnicity'. The community may experience disadvantages in society and the economy ('marginality') which may influence tourist participation. The cultural mores and norms of that community will also have an influence on participation, separate from marginalisation ('ethnicity').

This paper reflects, in part, the concern of the *Tourism for All* report published by the English Tourist Board in 1989.[2] This report was the outcome of the deliberations of a working party of the UK tourist boards and other interested groups. It acknowledged that, in any one year, 40% of the adult population does not take a holiday (of four or more nights). The working party reaffirmed the philosophy that consumer tourism should 'include all people, irrespective of age and disability' and sought to identify further strategies to 'widen holiday opportunities for families and others on low income'. One criticism of the report is the rather 'unbalanced' nature of its priorities.[3] The 'disabled' were targeted significantly as a special needs group, whilst the needs of and potential provision for the economically disadvantaged such as unemployed, single-parent and low-income families were understated. The Afro-Caribbean community may be a particularly vulnerable group, characterised by low income, unemployment and single-parent households, etc.

Whilst little work has been undertaken on tourism by ethnic minorities, a small number of limited studies exists in the USA.[4–6] They are predominantly marketing orientated being concerned with the potential of the large black American market and have not been concerned with identifying the wider social and cultural issues influencing tourist activity. Redekop[7] for instance, foresaw a growth of the black American middle class and a consequent rise in demand for tourism activity to places such as Canada. The majority of these studies do not ack-

nowledge in any detail the varying cultural tastes, needs of and constraints on other black American groups. Thus Goodrich's[4] notion 'black American tourist' is too general by implying an economically undifferentiated reality.

Philipp concluded that tourist participation by urban blacks in the USA does differ fairly significantly from that of the white community. He observed two features of tourism that he believed to be a reaction to discrimination and prejudice: that blacks travel more in large groups and are more likely to frequent places of familiarity than are whites.[8]

The studies cited above, and those on leisure/recreation generally[9–11] have been particularly quantitative. Furthermore there has been an over reliance on comparative studies[6,8,9,10,12] rather than a more qualitative approach within a specific community. There is an implicit and automatic assumption in comparative studies that blacks desire to emulate and be assimilated into the white norm.

One study that has moved away from this tradition is Western's qualitative approach in a limited but in-depth investigation of Barbadian families in London.[13] Travel preferences were only one part of the wide-ranging study but it was evident that Barbados dominated all vacation destinations because of strong family ties. Family holidays in both Britain and Europe were not as significant as day trips (which were usually to seaside resorts and amusement parks).

In the general absence of direct evidence relating to tourism by the Afro-Caribbean community in the UK, a number of factors that have a bearing on this can be identified.

Economic factors

The Afro-Caribbean community in the UK may be considered to be marginalized in society, by being denied equal opportunities and benefits of citizenship. Attention has been drawn to the effects and consequences of discriminatory practices in education, the criminal justice system, and the housing and the labour markets. Lord Scarman, in his report on the inner-city riots of the early 1980s, located discrimination by employers and the working environment as a component of social conflict.[14] Urban unrest may be correlated, in part, to the difficulties of access to recreation services; such access could act as a positive social outlet and expression of identity.

A survey by the Policy Studies Institute indicated that Asian and Afro-Caribbean males earned an average of 15% less than the 'white British salary'.[15] A significant proportion of ethnic minorities are employed in distribution, hotels, catering and repairs; these are industries characterized by low pay and poor conditions.

Successive reports by the Department of Employment have stressed that West Indians experience average unemployment rates two to two and half times greater than 'white' unemployment rates. From 1987 to 1989 Afro-Caribbean youths were particularly vulnerable to unemployment and experienced a rate of 21% of that minority group population in comparison with 12% of the 'white' population.[16,17] Similar rates were evident in the 1993 Labour Force Survey.[18]

It has been further demonstrated from the Labour Force Surveys 1989–1991 that 78% of West Indian communities, compared with 30% of the white group, live in metropolitan county areas.[19] This may indicate social deprivation especially with respect to high unemployment rates and low wages.

An additional indicator of such deprivation is the significance of single-parent families: Afro-Caribbean families are three times more likely than white families to be one-parent families, running the risk of long-term poverty.

One observer concluded that 'every indicator of poverty shows that black people and other ethnic minority groups are more at risk of high unemployment, low pay, shift work and poor social security rights. Their poverty is caused by immigration policies which have often excluded people from abroad from access to welfare, employment patterns which have marginalised black people and other ethnic groups into low paid manual work, direct and indirect discrimination in social security and the broader experience of racism in society as a whole.'[20]

Low pay, unemployment and single-parent status limit the purchasing power available for leisure pursuits. The long-term unemployed experience considerable sociocultural and economic problems which curtail organized leisure pursuits. Thus, by many conventional criteria, the Afro-Caribbean community in the UK is disadvantaged or marginalized in economic terms. It is therefore likely that the Afro-Caribbean community is 'marginalized' in respect of leisure too. It might be expected that participation in leisure and tourist activities would be different from that of the rest of the UK population.

Such limited access to and participation in leisure may, however, itself be considered an indicator of disadvantage or poverty in the sense of social and cultural deprivation. Poverty may be considered to be evident when 'one does not have adequate leisure time nor access to participation in recreation activities'.[21]

Social and cultural factors

Discrimination

Whatever the causes of economic disadvantage in the Afro-Caribbean community that disadvantage

will have an undoubted effect on the ability to enter the market and purchase 'leisure products'. With respect to sporting activities, Carrington's United Kingdom study[22] established that the Afro-Caribbean community tended to succeed in sporting activities where facilities and equipment are inexpensive, such as football rather than, for example, golf which remains the domain of 'white middle-upper income groups'. Additionally, however, leisure activity will be influenced by issues other than the ability to purchase: issues of a social and cultural nature.

A Greater London Council (Arts and Recreation Committee) report in 1982[23] reviewed the distribution of recreation and leisure opportunities throughout London. It concluded that the inner city was deficient in supply of facilities, especially open space provision, in such areas. Ethnic minorities are low users of parks, and sports and recreation centres partly because of the tendency for such communities to live in inner-city areas (see above).

Green *et al*[24] acknowledged that family and domestic toil were major barriers to leisure participation amongst Afro-Caribbean women. The authors utilized the Greater London Council survey (1984) of Women's Use of Transport to highlight other relevant determinants of marginal leisure access such as work, limited travel expenses and cost of the pursuits. Only a third of such Afro-Caribbean respondents travelled for pleasure each week, a rate significantly lower than for a larger sample of London women. What was also relevant was that 45% of this minority group did not travel on their own in the evenings and 85% feared to go out at night time.

In the same way as discrimination and prejudice are responsible for the economic disadvantage of the Afro-Caribbean community, they are also responsible more directly for leisure disadvantage and marginalization. Prejudice in leisure pursuits was the predominant theme in two recent publications by the Commission for Racial Equality.[25,26] They both produced evidence of the discriminatory practices of exclusion that occur in places such as sports complexes, social centres and night clubs. A 'whites-only' policy was believed to be operated implicitly and, at times, explicitly in the refusal of entry to persons based on their 'colour'.

Discrimination, however, need not be overt but may be perceived as an internal construct. Many in the Afro-Caribbean community might believe that they are unwelcome or would feel uncomfortable participating in particular activities which have historically been 'white-dominated'. (See below: Cultural non-representation and tourist imagery.)

Historical experience

Historical evidence, from the Grand Tour through the rise of European tour operators in the 19th century to the large-scale diversified development of transnational corporations in this century, has demonstrated that tourism and the generation of wealth is predominantly from the 'West' and the former colonial and neo-colonial countries.[27]

The historical experience of 'travel' for the Afro-Caribbean has, however, been one of exploitation epitomized in the slave system (from the 16th to the 19th century) and migration since the 1940s. Experience of tourism *per se* has been limited for this ethnic group compared with 'white Europeans'.

The UK, in the 1950s, recruited labour from various Caribbean countries to work in the manufacturing and service sector industries. Both Fryer and Ramdin highlight the role of West Indians in Britain during the period after migration and illustrate how they formed a 'reserve army of labour' .[28,29] Fryer describes the culture shock and various prejudices experienced which culminated in the race riots thereafter. Hall has described the lack of coordination between immigration and housing policy that took place in the postwar urban reconstruction period.[30]

The migration of ethnic minorities to Britain was contemporaneous with the growth of tourism in and from Britain associated with the consumer revolution of the 1960s. Tourism for the 'masses' became increasingly significant in the postwar era. The British working class participation in tourism rose considerably despite its marginal nature in earlier periods. The Afro-Caribbean community's experiences of travel in the 20th century and earlier were rather different and were not associated with the leisure activity of recent mass tourism.

Afro-Caribbean 'role models'

Restricted access to the professions and to the policy-making process, a lack of representation and few 'role models' within the tourist industry lead to low holiday-taking. The tourist industry is primarily conceived of as a place of employment rather than of consumption. In addition it is regarded as an aspect of 'white exploitation' where few of the positions of power and influence are occupied by the Afro-Caribbean community. Non-whites are likely, therefore, to feel uncomfortable as customers in such an industry.

The Commission for Racial Equality conducted a survey between 1987 and 1989 of 117 hotels owned by the 20 largest hotel groups in the UK.[31] It found that no ethnic monitoring of employees and job applications occurred, despite equal opportunity policies. This proved detrimental to the recruitment of ethnic minority employees. Furthermore, 70% of ethnic minority employees, compared with 30% of 'white' employees, were in unskilled positions (such as porters, waiters and cleaners). Comparatively fewer ethnic minority managers, supervisors and clerical grades were recorded.

Another observer found that in Central London

hotels, 45% of those employed were from 'black' ethnic groups, with working conditions of low pay, unsocial working hours and a minimal level of unionization.[32] Wood claimed that hotel and catering management's prime interest is in low-cost labour comprising largely 'marginal employees', women, young people and ethnic minorities.[33]

Unequal access to high-status posts and employment in general can be accounted for by 'social closure'. Covert discrimination occurs where informal recruitment patterns persist through ascriptive status. Prejudice has been proposed as a causal factor of access where 'white' people have refused to work with or have shown hostility towards ethnic minorities.

According to Lee, 'disadvantage does not simply manifest itself at the point of recruitment and selection for employment but is part of the social experience for many before organisational practices become relevant. The implication here lies with the social experience of society's prejudices.'[34] However, the organizational practices of the tourism industry must not be underestimated; lack of management, lack of representation in marketing, heritage displays, countryside recreation and 'gate-keepers' (such as Afro-Caribbean tour guides and rangers) may be a significant factor explaining marginal participation.

Ethnicity

Ashton concluded that the lack of leisure need not be related to limited income but is more a reflection of individual tastes or preferences.[35] The Afro-Caribbean community may have its own cultural aspirations, preferences and norms which result in a lesser interest in 'the holiday' as experienced by others.

Roberts believed that it should not be assumed that minorities wish to emulate mainstream leisure habits.[36] This contention points to the consolidation of one's own diasporic culture through pursuing subjective cultural values and activities through music, styles, etc. Hall and Jefferson's ethnographic study of West Indian youth culture clearly supports this.[37] Similarly a report on 'Leisure Needs of Black People' by a Working Group for the London Borough of Lewisham emphasized that 'leisure' may be considered as informal pursuits such as 'relaxation', 'hanging out', 'conversation' etc. which are of considerable importance to such a community.[38]

Through the above studies there has been a growing body of knowledge on ethnic minorities and participation in sports and recreation. Parry has significantly reviewed the recent literature on leisure and ethnic groups in the 1970s and 1980s, highlighting particular patterns, difficulties in access and problems in participation.[39] Informal activities such as visits to public houses tend to be of less interest to the Afro-Caribbean community. From a Depart-

ment of Education and Science report *Young People in the 80s*, it was noted that 37% of West Indians did not consume alcohol except at clubs and parties. Visiting public houses was, thus, essentially a 'white' activity.[40] Furthermore West Indian diet and culinary taste is not generally catered for in hotel restaurants and cafes in 'tourist enclaves'.

The assumptions of the social necessity to travel fail to recognize ethnicity as a variable in tourism motivation. The desire to participate in activities provided by sun, sea and sand tourism, countryside recreation and so on are less significant. Alternative activities such as visiting friends and relatives (VFR) are seemingly significant especially for the first-generation black community, the motive being both the maintenance and enhancement of kinship networks. However, Jackson has commented that research has not been forthcoming on the significance, nature and extent of the VFR market.[41] Furthermore the annual carnival, an expression of Afro-Caribbean identity and locally organized pleasure is an additional significant characteristic.

Product factors

Tourist imagery and the product

International tourism, characterized by 'charter and package holidays', is largely western orientated, both ideologically and economically. This influences the quantity and quality of tourist activities experienced by ethnic minorities. The prevailing role of transnational companies from the 'First World' significantly determines the nature and direction of tourism.[42,43] Furthermore, through mass marketing strategies and the development of tourist enclaves, themes prevail where cultural items of food, clothing, alcohol, etc are displayed which are acceptable to the tastes of the white European and American tourist.

The tourist imagery of holiday brochures, postcards and travelogues, etc alienates the Afro-Caribbean community since a homogenous, unrepresentative and mythical product is generally conveyed. Uzzell's analysis of holiday brochures of the Mediterranean found that the image of a tropical scene, such as in the Caribbean, 'distances the tourist from the native culture and inhabitants, and establishes a northwest European cultural superiority'.[44] The tourist monopolizes the setting of an exotic paradise for the duration of the holiday seldom mixing with locals. Such superiority for Uzzell is displayed through a variety of images based on economic, social and physical power and these evolve respectively around consumer sovereignty, social prestige and sexuality.

Albers and James's content analysis of a large variety of post cards demonstrated how 'ethnic subjects' become authentic and exotic strangers, and are consequently denied their 'concrete existence'

through being presented in an ahistorical manner. This dehistoricisation involves a process whereby the local is isolated from his/her historic and socioeconomic reality.[45]

'Content analysis' of racial stereotypes and ethnic representations in various tourist brochures (especially of the Caribbean) would demonstrate how images of the 'ethnic other' are presented in a rather servile and subservient manner. Crick has stated 'tourism involves an illusion, stereotype, wishful thinking, images, false advertising and lies'.[49]

Former colonialist ties to the 'mother country' are also portrayed in tourist literature. Brochures of Caribbean destinations (such as Grenada) incorporate images of ruins of former plantations, fortresses, etc into the tourist agenda.[47] Such imagery is more appealing to the 'white tourist' than the potential 'black visitor', owing to the historical representations of familiarity (political, cultural and economic).

Inhabitants of tourist-receiving societies in the Third World perceive the tourist as 'white' and 'affluent'. In Grenada the 'tourist awareness campaign' promoted by the pro-American government is one illustration of the local indigenous tourist not featuring in the industry's promotional programme. The 'local' is consequently 'marginal' in a reality where an unequal distribution of wealth and allocation of resources prevails.[48]

Additionally the formation of social relationships, nuclear family trips, etc contributes to the popularity of package holidays. These factors contribute to an 'exclusionary barrier' for the Afro-Caribbean community, which may feel more comfortable in its own familiar environment with its own cultural norms.

Said examined how Europe created a concept of the 'Orient' (via arts, literature, etc) to refer to those who inhabit the Middle Eastern countries.[49] In general terms, 'Orientalism' is a symbol of European Atlantic power and wealth, postulating that non-European cultures are 'static' and 'primitive' creating an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. There is a contention that this is reinforced through socioeconomic and political institutions, such as the heritage industry. Said's perspective may be a relevant and focal contribution to the understanding of cultural representations of the Afro-Caribbean community in Britain in respect of both the tourist and the heritage industry, and importantly in a comprehension of the power relations that are inherent in determining that representation.

Cultural non-representation

The heritage industry has become an increasingly significant and institutionalised tourist activity both for the domestic and the international tourist. Museum tourism is, however, alienating for ethnic minorities, in part because of the presentation and symbolic meanings of its displays. According to

Ramamurthy[50] 'at its core the museum remains an institution which culturally upholds an imperial Britain'.

The contention is that there is a selective display of products where 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' is ideologically determined by the dominant discourse. This selection is racially and culturally determined. Multi-ethnic displays in ethnographic museums deal with the 'heritage of plunder' and with a static view of history as opposed to an 'active' and positive reading. Additionally, museums in Manchester neglect to mention how this city gained commercially through the slave trade. The active role of Manchester's Abolition movement and its conflicts with the city's slave traders have not been referred to in any detail. Similarly, until recently the Geffrye Museum (London) presented isolated displays of middle-class lifestyles and taste, mystifying the role of Sir Robert Geffrye's position as a wealthy merchant and his involvement with the Royal Africa Company and consequent connections with the slave trade. This undervalued context of Afro-Caribbean heritage is an irony given the Geffrye museum's location in the London's East End's multicultural society. Thus it seems to be the case that slavery tends to be a 'troublesome taboo' and consequently is denied in its representations.

Many 19th-century oil paintings are Eurocentric in that they depict 'black' people as either providing background colour or indicating servitude to their master's status. According to Gilroy, 'thinking about England is being conducted through the racial symbolism that artistic images of "black" suffering provide. They were an integral means by which England was able to make sense of itself and its destiny'.[51]

An notion of 'Englishness' alien to Afro-Caribbeans is also portrayed by the rural heritage tradition. Tradition is reproduced through institutions such as the National Trust, which was originally concerned with land and public access but is now preoccupied with stately homes and their private aristocratic meaning.

It has been established that residents from affluent suburbia are frequent users of the countryside in comparison with those from multiracial areas.[52] The countryside tradition upholds values that are non-communicable to outsiders from other classes. Ethnic minorities are not incorporated into the 'imagined community', a community which is ethnically undifferentiated under the authentic, cultural content of Englishness.

Agyeman considers that first generation minorities had their links with the countryside disconnected due to emigration from rural homelands to the urban metropolis.[53]

However, 'positive welcome' strategies are an essential component to reduce barriers of unfamiliar cultural associations and the lack of confidence that the ethnic minorities have in such a territory (see

above: role models). Although the Countryside Commission (unlike the English Tourist Board) has realized that countryside recreation is socially selective, it remains the domain of high-income groups and the Commission has under estimated the social and economic filters which inhibit usage.

One such filter could be lack of mobility. For example, 70% of households in Moss Side, Manchester (a community with over a third of its population of Afro-Caribbean origin) do not have their own transport.[54] Nevertheless it still could be the case that by participating in the imagined community of English heritage, one's cultural identity is threatened. The Afro-Caribbean community may not wish to participate in mainstream tourist activity.

Conclusions

The Afro-Caribbean community in the UK is characterized by 'deprivation' in social and economic terms. Deprivation is, however, multidimensional and one aspect of that deprivation is currently under-researched. Leisure participation is considered one of the more important dimensions of the quality of life and limited participation may reasonably be deemed a further aspect of deprivation. This facet is one which is under-investigated in the case of the Afro-Caribbean community in the UK. In particular, there is little direct evidence relating to holiday-taking.

Holiday-taking habits might, however, be inferred from evidence relating to the community generally. There is a consensus that the Afro-Caribbean community is marginalized in the economy and society; incomes are typically below average and unemployment is high. This would suggest that holiday-taking is limited. Additionally the community does not identify with many of the tourism activities of the dominant white population: the Afro-Caribbean community has, in the past, not experienced travel as the hedonistic pleasant event that the Western European has. Travel has been associated with the power imbalance of slavery and the economic necessity of migration. The perception of the domestic tourist industry is, itself, not particularly welcoming; in the UK, ethnic minorities have obtained poorly paid employment in the industry and it exemplifies the economic exploitation of the community. The overseas package holiday market, in particular, is considered to be characterized by western, white, imperialist imagery.

In the UK both heritage and rural tourism project images with which the Afro-Caribbean community does not readily identify. Neither is empathetic with the black, urban cultural experience. In the case of heritage tourism the heritage either reflects the origins of the present inequitable power balance between black and white or a heritage that is completely alien.

All of this suggests that the Afro-Caribbean community is less likely to take holidays than is the rest of the UK population and/or to travel for different reasons.

These are matters that remain to be investigated, yet research programmes, conclusions and generalizations should take into consideration and reflect the fact that the Afro-Caribbean community is not homogenous and has heterogeneous characteristics of gender, generation and identity. Nevertheless if differences in holiday-taking are systematically evident then these may themselves be sources of tension as features of further marginalization of the community in the UK. The Afro-Caribbean community is not sharing in those aspects of the 'good life' that much of the rest of the population takes for granted. The factors identified in this paper will need to be addressed for social reasons. At another level, even if any differences are not considered to be inequitable, they present an opportunity in the form of untapped markets.

More fundamentally, however, it might be mistaken and presumptuous to suppose that the Afro-Caribbean community seeks the same or similar tourist experiences to those of the rest of the population. A consideration of ethnic identity and cultural aspiration suggests that the holiday is more of a priority and ideal for 'Western Europeans' than it is for other ethnic groups. In addition a desire to preserve cultural distinctiveness may result in the Afro-Caribbean community deliberately seeking not to emulate 'mainstream' activities such as holiday-taking.

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